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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

FIELD MEMORANDUM SCS 1134

Re: Principles of Water
Conservation in the
Soil Conservation Service.

September 20, 1950

TO ALL RANKING OFFICERS:

People using land and water and those affected by their use are being confronted daily with new and complex water problems that are related to the land. The flow and quality of water in surface streams, floods, recharge of ground water, reservoir storage, waterlogging of lands, alkali accumulations, erosion, sedimentation, and the soil moisture available for plant growth are all influenced materially by the use and management of our land resources.

In most instances individual landowners and water users have no control over the sources of these problems and hence are unable to deal with them effectively. As a result, local groups and agencies are seeking help more and more frequently in the solution of these problems. The Soil Conservation Service, in fulfilling its authorized responsibilities, must do everything possible within available resources to provide this help.

By their nature, water problems must be analyzed by areas which include both the points where the water originates and the points where it is used or where it is causing damage. In many cases such areas are natural watersheds. In other cases they are areas contributing to ground water recharge or discharge. Each kind of area must be considered as a unit in working out the solution of its particular problems and their relation to other areas. Within each area, the possibilities of water conservation, wise use and management must be determined in relation to the capabilities of the land, existing water uses and rights, and anticipated water needs.

The water conservation activities of the Service must be continuously geared to the needs of land and water users and coordinated with the activities of other agencies concerned with land and water resources. Therefore, the Service will be guided by the following principles in furthering sound soil and water conservation.

PRINCIPLES OF WATER CONSERVATION IN THE SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

1. The Soil Conservation Service will continue to work toward the sound development, conservation, wise use, management and permanent protection of the Nation's water as well as its land.
2. The Service will cooperate with local, state, and Federal agencies and with other organizations and groups concerned with water and land in all phases of water conservation.

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a. The Service will continue to furnish the major share of its technical and other services in water conservation to farmers and ranchers by assistance to soil conservation districts.

3. The Service will work toward the permanent solution of water problems with due regard to all beneficial uses, including recreational and wildlife aspects, through the establishment and continuance of land and water use adjustments, conservation practices, and structures needed in each water conservation problem area. In such areas one or more of the following water problems may be involved:

- a. Storage of water in the soil for crop, forage and timber production, with due regard to prior rights to the use of water.
- b. Improvement and protection of rural water supplies for farmstead, livestock, crop, and protective and recreational uses, where such measures contribute to the conservation of soil and water resources.
- c. Improvement, protection, maintenance and efficient use of water supplies, water distribution systems, drainage facilities and soil resources for irrigation of dry land, or supplemental irrigation in humid areas.
- d. Diversion or removal of excess water from wet lands with due regard to land capability and recreational and wildlife values.
- e. Control of floodwater, erosion, and sediment damages to crops, rural and urban land, property and developments, such as roads and drainage facilities; and protection of human life.
- f. Increase of the low water flow of streams to reduce pollution and improve the quality of water supplies for domestic, irrigation, power and other uses.
- g. Use of surplus or salvaged surface waters to increase recharge of receding ground water useful for agricultural and other purposes.
- h. Reduction of sedimentation in reservoirs used for municipal and industrial water supply, flood control, navigation, power development, irrigation, recreation, and other purposes.
- i. Reduction of sedimentation in harbors, navigation channels, and irrigation and drainage systems.
- j. Improvement of water quality and protection of channels and water impoundments essential for the preservation of fish and other wild life resources.
- k. Reduction of consumptive use of water by eradication of nonbeneficial riparian vegetation.

4. In carrying forward its conservation activities, the Service will use the water conservation problem area (ground water province, watershed, etc.) as the basis for obtaining, analyzing, and interpreting technical water information.
5. The Service will develop an adequate classification of water problems for planning and carrying forward water conservation activities.
6. The Service will develop an adequate inventory of water conservation needs as the basis for determining requirements for and timing of Service assistance to conservation districts in helping other organizations, groups, and individual land and water users.
7. The Service will establish an equitable system for measuring and reporting accomplishments, giving recognition to all those values which reflect benefits accruing from soil and water conservation work done on the basis of water conservation problem areas.
8. The Service will continue and improve its water conservation investigations to provide a better basis of fact and experience on which to base its soil and water conservation program.
9. The Service will provide technical services and guidance to:
 - a. Groups of conservation districts in planning and scheduling their water conservation activities for water conservation problem areas that cover more than one district.
 - b. Individual conservation districts and other public enterprises having authority under law to adopt or contribute to soil and water conservation programs in aid of individual water users, small unorganized groups, and organized water enterprises.
10. The Service will encourage conservation districts and other organizations to use, to the fullest extent practicable, available assistance from all public and private sources, including the natural leadership resources of land and water users.
11. The Service may loan and grant needed equipment when available and furnish available materials and other services to conservation districts for use in establishing water conservation measures.
12. The Service will continue to strengthen the organization and management of its technical services in order to assure that appropriate information and assistance in water conservation are provided when and where needed.
13. The Service will cooperate with other agencies of the Department of Agriculture in exchange of data and in providing counsel on specific water problems; and will cooperate with the Office of the Solicitor in assisting appropriate public bodies with problems involved in state water legislation.

14. The Service, in cooperation with the Office of the Solicitor, will provide the Secretary of Agriculture with information as to the probable effects of proposed water legislation. The Service will also furnish technical information useful to the Secretary in developing recommendations on proposed water legislation and in formulating broad departmental policies and programs.
15. The Service, on request, will exchange information and participate in the review of reports of state and other Federal agencies concerned with water problems; and will encourage their participation in aid of water conservation.
16. The Service will inform the public of the significance of water conservation problems and activities and will cooperate with all appropriate local, state, and Federal agencies and organizations in accomplishing these objectives.

H. H. Bennett

Chief

